

Zompiewolf 151

Chapter 151 – Skills: Some New, Some Old. (2)

"I heard you wanted to meet me?" Jonathan asked Mera in the most uncaring tone, "What is it about?"

"You and I both know why, your highness," Mera replied in a similar tone.

Neither one of them was thrilled about meeting each other. While Mera felt so because of her hate for Jonathan, it wasn't the same case for Jonathan. Earlier he thought of Mera as an asset who if taught well and given enough resources might help him in his plan.

At least that was what Jonathan had in mind for her. Her only fault was that she wasn't a pureblood or else Jonathan would have happily made her the crown princess of the kingdom. He didn't really care about her bloodline, but seemingly the ministers and other high-ranking members did.

Back then Lycania was in a state of chaos with the sudden emergence of the swamps and Jonathan could not afford to lose the precious support of his ministers. As a result, he was forced to distance himself from Mera. Which she did not take well, obviously.

Slowly her grudge started to get bigger and bigger, while Jonathan tried his best to achieve some sort of stability in his kingdom. He was hopeful Mera would forgive his neglectful behaviour, but by the time he could reach out to her, things had taken a turn for the worse.

Jonathan, for once, wanted to be a father to Mera, but it was too late. Her anger towards him and the nobles had gotten way too big for him to cross over. As a result, he decided it was best to distance himself from her.

However, he never stopped protecting her. Even when the Conundrum found her to be a 'potential' threat to the kingdom, he vetoed their decisions until he turned his attention towards conquering his dreams. From then on, he had not spared a single thought for her, until this moment.

"If you want the boy, I'm afraid he isn't here. If that's all you can leave." Jonathan dismissed her, but she wasn't like the rest of his children who would do whatever daddy told them to.

"Allow me to enter his bungalow." She put her point forward, "Ashton isn't the only one I care about who lives there."

"Surprising... since when did you start caring about humans?"

"Oh please, between the two of us, I have always been the one to care about the humans more than you ever did." Mera scoffed, "You know with my mother being one of your human conquests."

"Be very careful regarding what you say about Asheera!"

Jonathan never lost his cool, at least not so much that he would start yelling at the top of his lungs. Hell, no one had ever seen him like that, especially with the mention of a human. His rage showed itself in the form of a huge aura burst, strong enough to knock several royal guards down.

Even Mera found it a bit difficult to get pushed back... all because she mentioned her human mother.

"Hmm... I didn't think you care about her so much. Especially when you never even visit to see her once when she was on her deathbed." Mera continued throwing verbal jabs at him, "I don't care about the past. I think we're done here. Permission or not, I will enter the building and if anyone dares to stop me, then you know what I am capable of."

With those words, Mera left the palace with her bodyguards closely following her. None of them wanted to stay back and test the king's patience any more than their mistress had already done. As she disappeared, everyone left in the courtroom was stunned into absolute silence.

Well, most of them did not speak a word as they were afraid of what Jonathan might do to them if they did.

Back near the cave, Seven was getting a bit nervous. Although he said he would enter the cave around the 45-minute mark to check on Ashton, he didn't do so. And now, more than one and a half hours had passed and still, there was no sign of him.

"Damn it! I should have gone along with him." Seven cursed under his breath while looking at the cave's entrance, "I should probably go in now... fck, I'd rather have the kid pissed at me rather than being sentenced to death for not being able to protect him."

Seven made up his mind and bravely marched inside the cave. It only took him a couple of minutes to find the carnage Ashton had left behind. To say that his jaw dropped with shock would be an understatement.

He had never even heard about creatures like that, let alone kill them. Finding the dead monsters only put him under more stress. He was now worried about Ashton.

The kid might have been skilled but going against a species no one had any information about was... a bit troubling. It was problematic even for him who was on the verge of evolving his class.

"After a closer look, I don't think these creatures are extraordinarily strong or something." Seven squatted down next to one of the corpses and began examining it, "He should have been able to take care of them with ease. Maybe, I'm unnecessarily being paranoid."

A flash of relief could be seen on his face. But it was short-lived because the next moment, the knight found himself surrounded by two dozen wraith wolves who had arrived there looking for their pack members.

When the wolves saw Seven next to their fallen brethren, they immediately charged in. Their numbers could easily overwhelm anyone. After all, their pack strategy had never failed before.

"Looks like I'll get to test their skills myself."

In an instant, Seven took his sword out and dashed straight towards the incoming wolves. His nerves were calm and his body backed with a resolve to kill all these creatures. His hands moved like lightning as he quickly got rid of all the wolves one after another.

"Strange... they are pathetically weak. Even weaker than the creatures we found outside." Seven mumbled to himself, "I wonder why that city guard said the cave is dangerous. It's been a walk in a park till now- wait for a second... the hell is going on here?"

The wolves he had just killed were slowly getting back to their feet. It didn't matter whether he had severed their heads or not. They simply regenerated as if nothing had happened to them in the first place!

"On a positive note.... at least I know why this place is dangerous. Fck me! Where the heck is Ashton!?"

Chapter 152 – Grim Reaper Quest (1)

Three hours later...

Seven had no idea how these low levelled beasts kept healing from his attacks. It didn't matter what ability he used, the beasts remained unaffected. He, on the other hand, was slowly starting to have a hard time fighting them.

He didn't remember how long he had been fighting and running away from these beasts. But at least a couple of hours must have passed because he was slowly running out of breath. His body had started to feel a bit heavy, also all the armour he was wearing didn't make running away any easier for him.

Thankfully, the wolves were not as agile as him thus he was being able to hide away and rest up for a bit every now and then. But that didn't mean his problems were getting solved while he hid away.

'I need to find their weakness. They must have some! Every living being does.' Seven thought to himself while hiding away, 'Wait for a minute... all this time I have been trying to get rid of them as a group. Maybe if I can just separate them...'

Seven had made up his mind but what he was trying to do wasn't going to be easy. The wolves appeared to be attached to each other's waist. Not literally, but figuratively. It was almost impossible for anyone to separate one of them from the group.

'Not only that. It seems like they share some sort of linked intelligence. As if they have one brain but multiple bodies. I don't know if it's even possible but it is the only explanation I have for their extraordinary teamwork.'

It was rare for any type of night creature to work so well as a team. Thus he arrived at that explanation.

If what he was thinking was true, then rather than fighting these wolves off one after another, it would be better for him to locate the one having the 'central' mind and do something about it instead.

The only problem was, all this was a theory. Rather than having a central intelligence, it could also simply be that the creatures actually had excellent teamwork. In which case, Seven would only end up in more trouble trying to look for something that didn't even exist in the first place.

While he was wondering about all that, the wolves had found him once again. Just like before, Seven decided to escape rather than stay and fight them without a proper plan. However, this time, the wolves had come prepared.

Seven thought only a dozen or so wolves were following him, but the reality was much different. More than a hundred wolves had him surrounded that too without him noticing them. Things were not looking good for him but even in his last moments, he couldn't help but wonder about Ashton.

If he was having such a tough time there, then it would be nothing less than a miracle if Ashton had survived for half as long as he had. Seven was more or less sure Ashton was already dead which meant one thing... he too was as good as dead.

'Fck this! I should have resigned when I had the opportunity! That fucking kid screwed me over once again! Wait... do I smell something?'

Even in the face of death, Seven could not help but notice a peculiar stench. It resembled that of a vampire but at the same time undead as well. No... there was something else there. Something familiar... it was Ashton!

"Is he being attacked by an undead vampire or something?" Seven was in full-on investigation mode despite the wolves slowly closing in on him, "But this smell... it doesn't seem as if the smells are overlapping. It's more like they are coming from the same... person."

The reality of the situation suddenly came crashing on him. His intuition was right on point. The smells were coming from the same person and that person happen to be none other than Ashton. But he wasn't alone. He was surrounded by half a dozen skeletons that looked like the weird wolves surrounding him.

"I thought I told you not to come inside..." Ashton mumbled in an awkwardly eerie tone, "What should I do with you now? I guess I should punish you."

"Y-You... what are you!?" Seven replied hysterically, "You are not a werewolf! You're something more! How is this possible? How are you even alive!?"

Seven had never felt so threatened before in his life and the peculiar thing was that Ashton had never even done anything to make him feel that way. But the aura that was looming over Ashton felt hostile to Seven.

At that moment, he was more scared of Ashton than the hundreds of wolves around him. Hell, for the first time since entering the cave he felt like he would die, and not by his own will. No... he had to get out. he had to inform the king about Ashton or else all of them will be doomed!

"I'm something you should have never witnessed. Well, in hindsight it's a good thing that you did. I had been itching to use my newly learned abilities, and you're the perfect candidate for that." Ashton said and turned around before fixing the weird black earrings he was wearing, "Kill him."

The moment Ashton uttered those words, the skeletal wolves too charged towards Seven. As they did that, the remaining wraith wolves followed them in and attacked Seven.

"WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS!?" Seven screamed at the top of his lungs, but his screams were drowned in the cries of hungry wolves.

"I already told you, didn't I? I'm just trying out my new abilities. Unfortunately, both of them requires you to die. But don't worry, I'll make sure to inform the king how valiantly you fought against these wolves to protect me."

"YOU CRAZY BASTARD!!!"

"Oi, I already told you, I'll make sure you're rewarded well for your sacrifice. While are you cursing me? Do you want me to tell the king that you fled and left me alone?" Ashton shrugged his shoulders, "And it's not like you're dying forever. I'll make good use of you. Don't worry."

"ARGH!"

"Shut it! I'm trying to concentrate here. So hold your screaming for later. Right now I need to check on my stats. After all, killing Elder Wraith Wolf gave me many things. Gotta review them sometime right?"

As the wolves relentlessly bit Seven, Ashton just sat there intently watching his stats which had an explosive growth after he received his third class.

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Name: Ashton Fenrir

Species: Zombie (Active), Vampire (Active), Werewolf (Active), Human (Deceased).

Status: Zompiewolf

Class: Revenger (werewolf class), Blood Mage (vampire class), Necromancer (zombie class) /New!/

Title: [Defiant], [Novice Brewer], [Monkkin Slayer], [Researcher] /New!/

Age: 16 years

Gender: Male

Grade: F-tier (Evolution is possible) [Get to level 30 with all your classes to begin the evolutionary process.]

Affiliation: Werewolves.

Level:

> Werewolf Level: 19 (70%)

> Vampire Level: 17 (65%)

> Zombie Level: 18 (22%)

Stats:

HP: 5500/5500

Mana: 1950/1950 [+1200 Due to the item: Grim Reaper's earrings] (Effects will be removed once the item is unequipped.)

Damage: 70

Armour: 50

Stealth: 60

Stamina: 70

Agility: 60

Intelligence: 80 [+30 Due to the item: Grim Reaper's earrings.] (Effects will be removed once the item is unequipped.)

[UNUSED STAT POINTS]: 5

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"I'm gonna have lots of fun with this class.... haha!!!"

Chapter 153 – Grim Reaper Quest (2)

Roughly four hours ago...

Ashton was carefully following the wolverine skeletons through the forest. It wasn't like he was scared of facing off against the wolves, after all, he had finished the quest that Lucifer had so graciously given him. He just didn't want to waste any more time than necessary inside the cave.

'I'm pretty sure there are hundreds if not thousands of those wolves here. Even if they are weak, it would be a stupid decision to face all of them together.' Ashton thought, 'It's better to sneak in and out of here with the flower.'

While Ashton was doing that, he was forced to face another problem. The skeletons were often getting confused with his commands. He would ask one of them to do something, and the other one would jump to do the task instead, thinking it was asked to do the work.

Finding a solution to this problem was quite easy. He just named the skeletons Skelly1 and Skelly2. The names weren't the most creative, but eh, it wasn't like Ashton gave a fck about it. After that, it took them an hour to arrive at their destination.

There was a garden right in the middle of the forest. A garden filled with weird-looking white flowers. But that wasn't all... around the garden, numerous skeletons were scattered around. As if they were some sort of decorative piece for the garden.

"What the hell is that thing..." The flew right out of Ashton's mouth when he saw the gigantic creature sleeping in the middle of the garden as its protector.

It was another wraith wolf, but at the same time, it was nothing like the ones Ashton had seen before. For starters, this wolf was at least 5 times as large as the one he had fought before. Also, it had more horns than the rest. Hell, they even covered his spine to probably give it some more protection.

"Were you guys afraid of this?" Ashton asked the skeletons to which they nodded in reply, "I can see why you would be... I need those flowers but the only way I'll be able to do so is by killing the creature. But do I even stand a chance against it?"

Unlike before, Ashton no longer was a fool who would judge any creature simply on the basis of their levels. But with the skeleton's help, he might be able to poison the creature enough times to kill it.

'They might not be much effective in combat, but they can surely act as perfect distractions.'

The next moment Ashton instructed one of the skeletons to take the aggro on itself. While the skeleton did that, the remaining skeleton was instructed to irritate the Elder wolf even more from behind.

It was a cowardly plan but Ashton was left with no choice as Blood poison was the only thing that could work against wolves. He would be stupid to even think about using [Revenge] on the creatures who were immune to physical damage. Thankfully, he had the perfect skills and weapons to take care of the Elder Wraith Wolf from a distance.

[Unique Skill: Blood Mist has been activated.]

[Unique Skill: Blood Poison has been activated.]

A moment later, Ashton stabbed himself in numerous places to let the blood flow out of him freely in the form of a dense reddish-brown mist. While simultaneously helping him to soak the arrows for the crossbow with his blood.

A thick stench of blood covered the air, so it was no surprise that the Elder Wolf had woken up from his slumber and he did not look happy about his sleep getting interrupted. But when it tried looking for the ones who dared disturb it, it could not see anything through the dense red mist.

As the poison mist entered the elder wolf's respiratory system, Ashton received a notification along with a new quest.

[Elder Wraith Wolf has been affected with Poison.]

You have received a new mission!

[Introduction]: You have found the dungeon boss. Kill the creature to receive lucrative rewards.

[Objective]: Conquer the dungeon.

[Task]: Slay the Elder Wraith Wolf.

[Progress]: 0/1 Elder Wraith Wolf killed.

[Reward]: Authority over the dungeon.

[Mission Commissioned by]: System

[Priority Level]: 1 (The host cannot ignore the mission but would miss out on the rewards forever.)

"Well, I was already planning on killing the damned bastard, now I got one more reason to do so." Ashton mumbled with a smile as the wolves charged into the mist, "You might not be able to see shit through the mist, but I can."

The next moment, he fired a series of arrows straight towards the Elder wolf who was too busy chasing the skeletons around. Ashton knew he could not sustain the mist for a long duration as it was rapidly consuming his HP, as a result, he rained the arrows on the elder wolf as a hailstorm.

The skeletons were already immune to the blood poison, hence he did not have to worry about injuring them. Hence he kept shooting arrows after arrows, hitting the wolf again and again.

Ashton knew his plan was working as slowly but steadily, more and more poison was accumulating inside the Elder wolf's body. But there was a problem. As the Elder wolf's health got lower, his agility increased tremendously.

Soon, it was evident the skeletons won't be able to distract the boss any longer. The Elder's strength and agility were both too much for them to handle. However, Ashton didn't care.

He could always make more skeletons but he would only get this chance to kill the dungeon boss and gain the authority over the dungeon... whatever that meant.

A moment later, both the skeletons were destroyed and the elder wolf finally set his eyes on Ashton. But by now, the poison had done its job and Ashton cancelled the [Blood Mist] skill.

He knew the Elder wolf would be in a bad shape, but he didn't expect it to get completely buried with his arrows. Hell, there wasn't an inch of skin that hadn't been injured with his arrows. Still, the beast took a step towards him, before collapsing on the garden floor.

It wasn't dead yet, but it was as good as dead. The creature still had the will to fight and live on, but its body didn't.

"It hurts doesn't it?" Ashton felt like an asshole to himself saying those words, "Let me put you out of your misery."

The following moment, he punched a hole inside the Elder Wolf's body and ripped its heart out before the beast could do anything.

"I should steel my nerves for what comes next..." Ashton mumbled while remembering what happened after levelling up his Vampire genes, "Here goes nothing...."

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Chapter 155 – Resurrection

By having the 'Authority', it essentially meant that the dungeon had become something that was owned by Ashton. Which essentially meant that everything that once lived or was living there now, had to obey his will.

That was the reason why the wolves were continuously hunting down the 'intruder' and didn't attack Ashton even when he appeared in front of the wolves. To the wolves, Ashton was no longer an outsider, but their pack leader.

Unfortunately for Seven, the wolves weren't so forgiving towards him. The royal knight tried fighting back with all his might. But against the overwhelming numbers of the wolves, there was only so much he could do alone.

Soon the wolves overrun him and he bled to death from the hundreds of wounds he suffered. The sight didn't look pretty at all. His royal armour was torn to pieces, but on Ashton's command, his body was fairly intact.

It was necessary to have his body somewhat 'preserved' for the necromancy to work on him. Ashton calmly walked towards the fallen knight. Ashton had no ill will towards the knight but he was forced to do what he did.

After all, Seven got to know of his secret, and there was nothing Ashton would stop at to make sure his secret remained a secret. Even if it meant killing innocent and loyal soldiers.

"Tsk, if only you would have listened to me." Ashton shook his head before squatting down next to the corpse, "Maybe I'll be able to teach you to be more obedient this time around."

[Unique Skill: Resurrect has been activated.]

[Level 30 werewolf has been selected as the target.]

[Caution: The host's level is lower than the target's. Resurrection has only a 33.34% chance of success.]

[Even if the process is successful, the reanimated being might act out. Would you still like to continue?]

"Hm... I didn't think there would be an issue like this."

In the skill description, it mentioned there would be some restraints on the skill, but Ashton paid no heed to them. But he never thought there would be a restriction like this. What use would being a necromancer have if he couldn't even resurrect strong foes or 'friends' to become his allies.

However, on a positive note, at least there was a one-third chance of success. It was more than enough for him to act on. As for the question of resurrected Seven acting out was concerned, if he retained even a bit of his intelligence, Ashton would be able to convince Seven to obey him.

In the event he didn't retain his intelligence, well, then Ashton would simply have to kill him again and learn something from his experience. In a way, he would gain something regardless of the outcome.

"Let's do this."

As soon as Ashton said those words, a bluish magic circle appeared around the fallen knight. Simultaneously, the wounds all around his body started to heal. Seven's dusky skin turned black as if he was made of darkness. Even his broken armour found a way to stitch itself back onto Seven's body.

The magic was slowly showing its effect, Seven was being resurrected as something entirely new. It roughly took a minute for the process to complete. By the time it was over, about half of Ashton's mana was gone.

The [Resurrect] skill had no specific mana cost. Instead, it would consume mana based on two factors. Firstly was the condition of the corpse. The better state the corpse was in, the lesser mana the skill would consume.

Finally, the rank and level of the being Ashton wanted to resurrect. The higher the level, the higher was the mana consumption. On the other hand, having a higher level also meant that the chance of succeeding in the resurrection process was lesser.

Ashton had taken the risk but he had no idea what would end up happening. A moment later, the dark knight got to his feet, anxiously looking around himself as if he had no recollection of what had happened mere moments ago.

[Resurrection successful.]

[You have risen a lvl 35 Dark Knight. You can now view their details in the <Summons> tab of your system.]

The notifications flashed before Ashton's eyes, but his eyes were focused on the knight who no longer seemed to be Seven, but something else entirely.

"Who... I?" The knight asked in his hoarse voice.

Instead of answering him, Ashton quickly decided to check the knight's stats. There was something he wanted to confirm first.

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Name: ???

Species: Dark Knight (Active), Werewolf (Deceased).

Status: Resurrected Summon

Class: Duelist, Death Knight

Title: [Hell-dweller], [Back From The Dead]

Age: —

Gender: Male

Grade: F-tier (Evolution is possible)

Affiliation: <none>

Level:

> Dark Knight: 35 (0%)

Stats:

HP: 7000/7000

Damage: 90-110

Armour: 76

Stealth: 69

Stamina: Unlimited

Agility: 80

Intelligence: 9

Nature:

Righteous

—

'Just like I thought. Seven is dead and his corpse was simply used to create a new shell for his 'soul' to inhabit.' Ashton thought to himself while circling around the dark knight, 'Looks like his stats were reassigned as well. I refuse to believe his intelligence was so low when he was still alive.'

"Confused... troubled... why...?"

The knight was barely able to convey his thoughts through broken words. But Ashton knew the knight posed no threat to him, at least for now. It was best for him to act now and get the resurrected knight on his side.

"It's good to have you back... Sven." Ashton thought it wasn't wise to address the knight with his former name so he came up with a new lame name, "I thought I lost my loyal knight forever!"

"Who... you? How... know me?"

Sven was suddenly intrigued by Ashton's appearance. The moment he saw Ashton, he felt drawn to him. As if something wanted him to latch himself onto the person in front of him, to serve him with all his might. But Sven couldn't make any sense of it.

"Relax Sven. I have just resurrected you, it will take some time for you to adjust back into the world of the living." Ashton murmured in a sincere voice, "You are my soldier, remember? My protector, who volunteered to serve me?"

"Yes... serve you... protect you... protect master!" Sven immediately fell on his knees to pay his respect to his 'master', "Swear loyalty to.... master forever."

Chapter 156 – Academic Troubles

Meanwhile, tensions were rising in Contingent. After what happened with Ashton, not a single soul dared to stand up against the nobles who were still attending the academy. The students were only aware that Ashton had been expelled from the academy and was training somewhere else. Which more or less meant he was gone for good.

What they didn't know was that he was now working as an adventurer and gaining more and more powers and abilities as days passed. But why was Ashton still a source of tension in the academy? The answer was pretty simple.

While Ashton was attending the academy, all of the nobles more or less had their focus solely on him. But with him gone, the bullies had to look for new targets. Especially those who had their eyes set on the bounty which was placed on Ashton's head.

They felt as if they had been cheated out of the opportunity of earning a lot of money. That feeling led to frustration and with the primary target of their frustration gone, the nobles decided to find new toys to play with.

The academy had no shortage of such toys either. After all, the noble populous of the academy only constituted about 20%. The rest of the students belonged to the side families of the noble lords or were simply admitted into the academy on the basis of their talents.

These were the people who ended up on the receiving end of the noble's abuse of power. For the first time since the semester began, they were now being subjected to innumerable horrors, ranging from casual beating to downright torture.

The Academy was slowly turning back to the hell hole it was before. Only this time, there was no one who dared to stand against the nobles as they did whatever they wanted to.

Even the professors often turned a blind eye to the blatant abuse that was going on there because they had their own problems to deal with.

While all of this was going on, no one had seen the director. Even the professors didn't know what was going on with her as one day she just up and left without saying a word to anyone.

They were hoping she would return back soon, but that did not seem to be the case. The professors tried their best to not let the news of her disappearance leak out, but they inevitably failed.

Prior to her disappearance, the director was often seen wandering around the campus at least once a week. But it had been roughly three weeks and none of the students had seen her. This led to the students thinking and soon they realised she must have gone missing a few days after her trial.

Despite the professors not wanting to, they had to inevitably inform the authorities about her disappearance but nothing of substance was found. It was as if she had vanished in thin air.

Everyone had their own theory about what could have happened to her. But the majority of them believed someone must have gotten rid of her. As absurd as the thought of one of Lycania's strongest mages disappearing out of nowhere was, there was no other explanation for it either.

Either way, the investigations were still going on, but the director's absence only made the nobles rampage even more. She was the only one in 'power' to stop or at least keep the bullying and tormenting on the leash. But with her gone, all hell had broken loose in the campus.

However, it wasn't like all of the professors were ignoring the matter. Some professors had their own way of dealing with noble brats, especially Kakaroff.

Since the nobles wanted to prove their superiority so desperately, he gave them a chance to do so by giving them 10 times more work than the rest of the students. It was intended to punish the wrongdoers as well as give them less time to practically do anything apart from focusing on their work.

This 'diplomatic' way of punishing the students was somehow showing results so more and more professors incorporated it in their classes. While some of the professors were busy tending to the matters of the academy, the rest of them began looking for the director with little to no luck.

In the end, they had to give up, not knowing how far they were from finding her under the clutches of the Conundrum.

"He died!?" Baiter yelled in shock, "A royal knight died? How? Why? How...?"

"Shut it Baiter... didn't you see how shook Ashton was?" Renee retorted, "And now he is unconscious as well."

It had been an hour since Ashton turned back in the ruined city, drenched in his own blood. There were uncountable bite marks on his body, while the acidic rain had turned whatever remained of his skin into a canvas of pain.

Fae was desperately trying to heal him up while Virgil tried to untangle the head from the tail of what Ashton had told them before collapsing.

"Killing a royal knight is no joke." Virgil murmured, "But I can see it happening. This place, including the cave they went into, is shrouded in mystery. No one knows what kind of creatures might be hiding in the dark out there."

"But it's a royal knight we are talking about-" Baiter was having the hardest time accepting the reality.

"Royal knight or not, they are still living beings who can die." Virgil sighed, "We have to report it to the guild as well as the king. But first, we need to get our stories straight. For that, we need Ashton to regain consciousness."

A few moments later, Fae had done whatever she could to help Ashton. Although everyone had their questions, they had no choice but to wait for him to wake up. The atmosphere had turned gloomy with no one knowing what they were supposed to do now.

"Let's just hope the king is kind enough to let us keep our heads.." Virgil subtly hinted at the obvious, "He might not freak out about losing a knight as much as he would if something happened to Ashton."

Chapter 157 – A Plan Of Elimination (1)

'Looks like everything is going according to plan...!' Ashton thought to himself while laying on the dirty bed that reminded him of his early days in the enclosure.

If he wanted, he could have recovered from the wounds in an instant. But first he needed to make sure not to leave any loopholes in his story that could expose what truly happened inside the cave.

Also, since he was no longer using the [Grim Reaper's earrings] both his mana and intelligence were back to somewhat of normal levels. Which meant outsmarting a lot of people wasn't worth trying at the moment.

That being said, he had pulled a hell of a performance a few hours ago. Although allowing the acidic rain to burn his flesh might have been a bit over the top, it wasn't wise to use an umbrella or some shit to cover himself up as he had 'escaped the cave hurriedly'.

So far everyone seemed to be believing whatever he had said, but he was sure they had their questions regarding his tale. Therefore, he was taking a bit of time to sort out his story completely before 'waking up'.

'I was a bit worried about storing Sven and the skeletons wolves somewhere, thankfully the [Valhalla] skill saved that trouble for me. If they had seen me walking around with a bunch of reanimated creatures... it would have led to quite an interesting chat.'

While the skill [Resurrect] raised people from the dead, [Valhalla] was the skill that every necromancer would want to have. [Valhalla] skill essentially worked as an inventory, but rather than storing items, it stored reanimated beings in a pocket dimension which could be accessed at any time by Ashton.

At the moment, Ashton could only store 10 souls in it, which meant currently he had Sven and nine skeleton wolves under his authority. However, there was a problem. The limit of souls directly depended on his intelligence.

While Ashton was equipping the earrings, his intelligence was high enough to save 10 souls. But the moment he took off the earrings, he lost the ability to access 7 out of the 10 souls because his

intelligence wasn't high enough to control all of them. Thankfully, Sven was not one of the souls that got locked.

Still, in order to embrace the Necromancer class in its full glory, Ashton either had to increase his intelligence using some other gear or skills, or he would have to find a way to conceal the earrings while wearing them. But for now, he had something else to take care of.

'Time to start acting again... sigh, it's tiring but a man's got to do what he got to do.'

Ashton abruptly got up from his bed, bewildered. He didn't have any weapons but his hands were tightly clenched into fists, ready to fight. Obviously, he wasn't going to fight anyone, he was simply pretending that he did not have any recollection of making it back into the ruined city.

"Ashton, easy, easy! You're safe!" Virgil and Baiter rushed in to calm the kid down before he did something they could get into trouble for.

"When... how long I was out?" Ashton sat back on the bed, his face buried in his hands.

"A couple of hours..." Fae replied, "Here, drink this potion, it'll make you feel better."

"I don't have time for this! I have to inform the king about the dungeon. Those beasts... they killed Seven... right in front of me and I couldn't shit!" Ashton screamed in rage.

They never knew Ashton and Seven were so close. But they could have guessed as much. After all, Seven was his bodyguard, it was obvious they shared some kind of a bond. The guys didn't know how to console Ashton, but the ladies immediately sat beside him, trying to calm him down.

Once he was a bit calm, Virgil asked the most obvious question... what exactly were those creatures? After all, Seven was likely a bit over level 30 and for him to die just like that was a bit concerning.

"They looked like direwolves, but they were much worse." Ashton began recounting about Wraith wolves, "They had multiple horns along with translucent skin. At first, we thought it was good as we'd be able to see their organs and strike them there. But soon realised things were not going to go as smoothly as we thought."

He continued, "No matter how many times we stabbed them, burned them... they kept regenerating. Our attacks could temporarily stun them and make their pace slow, but we couldn't kill them. Not a single one. Seven thought if physical attacks aren't working then we'd only have to use magical ones..."

"But even those didn't work... I guess?" Virgil completed Ashton's sentence, to which the latter nodded, "It almost feels unbelievable. After all, there have been night creatures known to only suffer through either physical or magical attacks, but hell, this is the first time I've heard neither of the attacks working on them."

After that, everyone remained silent. None of them knew what to say. Especially when they couldn't even believe such a creature existed in the first place.

"Seven knew things would end up badly for both of us... that's why he took it upon himself to make sure that at least I got out of there. Someone had to inform the king about the creatures and find a way to get rid of them."

"That fcking royal brat..." Virgil chuckled, "They always have to think about others first. Even if it means to embrace death. Men having such resolve are rare... because we keep losing them over and over. So what's next?"

"I guess we should head back now. I need to inform his highness about... Seven and the creatures." Ashton replied and once again stood on his feet, "If we can get rid of the monsters, that would also help the king financially. Therefore I think he would be a bit interested in the cave."

Everyone got confused with what Ashton had just said. Clearing a dungeon could give them riches, there was no doubt about that, but the money they'd make wouldn't be a sum what would attract the attention of the king. Unless there was something else Ashton did not tell them yet.

"Don't tell me you actually found-" Fae uttered in surprise.

"Right in the middle of the cave, there is a garden, filled with histeria flowers.." Ashton mumbled before taking out a bunch of histeria flowers from his inventory, "This should be enough to entice him and let me take my revenge on those bastards for killing Seven."

Chapter 158 – A Plan Of Elimination (2)

A few days ago...

"Not a word yet eh? Man... even I gotta commend you for that!"

"...even I can hit someone better than you sissies." The director barely managed to mumble while her head lifelessly dangled between her shoulders.

"Tsk... and here I thought you'd have enough." The same masculine voice from before echoed in the dark room.

The room was so dark, even vampires would have a hard time seeing anything, even with their nocturnal vision. Yet, the man was able to land every single punch on its target. Which target you ask? The director's face of course. Well, technically her entire naked body.

Even the director didn't know how she got into this mess, but she was pretty sure it all began the day she appeared for her trial. She remembered that the nobles were not pleased with the way she was simply let go from all the charges without any consequences.

It must have pissed some if not most of the nobles. But even then she never thought those fools would ever dare to put their hands on her. After all, she was someone not only respected by the werewolves but also the vampires.

How could she imagine herself being kidnapped after knowing all that? However, now that she was tied to a chair and had been thoroughly tortured, her thinking seemed foolish to her.

But something felt a bit... off. Maybe the nobles did not have any hand in it. After all, they would not have any idea about the existence of the secret weapon Ashton's parents were working on before she threw them under the bus.

Only the resistance and Mera had some idea about the existence of someone who could wipe out the entire race of werewolves. But she couldn't see either of them trying to pull off something like this.

For starters, Mera was already too preoccupied with everything that must be going on with Ashton. As for the resistance, they would not have the guts or the runes to subdue her magic by completely draining her of any mana she had.

The only times she had witnessed such runes were used was during the trials of high-value targets, such as vampire counts or even for the kings of rebelling kingdoms. Only a handful of people probably had the access to such strong runes like King Jonathan.

But then again, it wasn't possible for him to know about it, unless...

As her bones were being broken, again and again, the director realised something. There was someone Mera trusted more than anyone else. Someone who followed her around like a shadow but was no longer by her side.

'Donovan... that bastard.'

Although the possibility of it was less, it could be that Mera informed Donovan about the secret weapon while he was still loyal to her. But now that he wasn't he was divulging every secret he knew about her to someone... or maybe a group of string people like the Conundrum.

If it was them, the director could certainly see them utilising the mana draining runes to keep her in check. She had known that the Conundrum was on her tail for quite a while now, thus she was sure to not give them any reason to act out.

But if Donovan had indeed found a way to get in touch with them and informed them about the weapon... that should be enough reason for them to publically make a move against her. All the time she had spent there, things were finally making sense to her.

But just coming up with a reason behind her kidnapping would not get her out of this mess. She needed to do something else... but what? Although she had been able to swallow all the pain to repent for what she did to her 'friends', her body will break sooner or later.

Before that happened, she needed to get out of there, or at least inform Ashton or Mera about the enemies that would come after him. After all... he was the weapon the Conundrum was so desperately trying to get to know about.

'I have to get out of here no matter what... for the sake of Ashton!'

"So... his name is Ashton. I should have known it was the son of those human bastards."

Yet another voice was heard, but this time the director was the only one who heard it as it was a voice inside her head.

The next moment the dark room lit up, momentarily blinding the director who had gotten used to the dark. In front of her, five people were standing. Their faces were covered in black clothing and all of them had a wolf shaped ring on different fingers.

It didn't take much time for the director to figure out who they were. She was witnessing what most people believed to be a myth, a rumour spread across the kingdom to keep the masses from acting out. But she knew they existed, as now they were standing right in front of her.

"It's an honour to meet you, Madam Director." the man standing in the middle greeted her with the utmost respect, which seemed out of place considering she was chained down and naked, "I would have wanted us to meet under better circumstances, but I guess we'll have to make do with what we have now."

The man had some sort of voice modifier that further helped in maintaining their secret identity. Still, the director tried to listen carefully, hoping she would be able to find more about her kidnappers. But it was all in vain.

The man continued, "So, would you mind telling me more about this Ashton kid? I'm afraid his existence would bring Lycania nothing but... unnecessary troubles. That being said, his elimination is of the utmost importance to us and in the interest of Lycania."

"Scre..."

"You want to say something?" The man mumbled before leaning in closer to listen to what the director had to say.

"Screw off... bitch."

"Hm... and here I thought you'd cooperate. It doesn't matter. We have the name, we will find more about him in a matter of minutes. When we do, we'll lure him in and kill both of you.." The man said with finality before walking out of the room, along with the rest of his friends.

Chapter 159 – They Don't Know That We Know (1)

Upon returning to Deja, Ashton and the rest of the crew had to spend a couple of days in quarantine. It was a safety measure against the notorious diseases that could be found near the swamps. Thankfully, all of them were clear and could carry on with their day to day activities.

But first, the king had summoned all of them to his throne room. The reason for it was obvious. A royal knight's death wasn't something Jonathan could just ignore. Also, he could not afford to let such news out in the public as the royal knights were seen as unstoppable heroes who couldn't die.

Even those who perished in battles were claimed to have either gone missing or had been captured by the enemy. It was an agenda to make the kingsmen seem godlike and in turn, it would help boost the morale of the citizens.

But now... well, Ashton and everyone else knew the royal knights might not be as mighty as they had been led to believe. Yet none of them was bold enough to speak their mind in front of the king.

Everyone was lined up in front of the king and questioned by him. Well, the others were let go easily while Ashton was asked to stay behind. Since he had crucial information about what happened in the cave, Jonathan wanted to interrogate him a tad bit more rigorously.

"Hm... that is troublesome indeed." Jonathan spoke once Ashton was done recounting his made-up tale once again, "We can't let such mysterious creatures roam around freely. Especially if they were able to kill Seven just like that. Is there anything else you remember?"

"I can't think of anything else at the moment, your highness. If I remember something, you'll be the first to hear about it." Ashton obediently replied while his head stared at his feet.

"That'll be all. You can leave now." Jonathan dismissed him but before Ashton could leave, Jonathan remembered something, "You should probably head home now. Someone has been waiting for you there."

"Will do." Ashton didn't bother bowing down before he left, which instead of pissing Jonathan off, impressed him.

It showed that even though Ashton was working for the kingdom, he wasn't going to recklessly serve them.

"That kid... there are too many mysteries around him." Jonathan mumbled to himself.

The next moment there was a sudden movement in the throne's shadow as three hooded figures revealed themselves in front of their king.

"Would you like us to tail the kid?" The female figure standing in the middle asked Jonathan.

The three of them were all dressed in the same gear. A hood that covered their entire faces, except their mouths, while the rest of their body was covered with light armour. It was so that their agility did not suffer as the type of jobs they were assigned often required them to strike and retreat.

After all, they were Jonathan's personal information collectors and assassins, also known as the 'Guardians'. In a lot of ways, they were similar to the royal knights. But unlike the knights, their existence wasn't known to a lot of people.

Hell, even the secretive Conundrum might not be aware of their well-hidden identities. One could also assume, the Guardians were Jonathan's personal grim reapers. Hidden in the shadows till they were required to do his dirty work for him.

"That kid is someone who will be joining your ranks one day. The loss of a dozen royal knights wouldn't affect me as badly as the loss of that kid." Jonathan mumbled, "That being said, I would like you to visit the cave and see what you can do about those creatures."

"Your wish is our command."

"You're dismissed." Jonathan waved his hand and the next moment the assassins disappeared just like they had appeared in the first place, "I thought a royal guard would be able to shield him. But I guess I have been overestimating their capabilities. I might need to smack some sense into them."

"Someone is waiting for me at the house. Well, it doesn't require me to use my intelligence points to guess who it could be." Ashton sighed and headed inside to meet the mistress.

He was expecting to see something weird, but what he saw was something entirely out of his expectations. Both Duncan and Daniella had their limbs been chained to the ground. Both of them were naked and had huge cuts on their backs.

Someone had been thoroughly whipping them up for quite some time now. Although it wasn't unusual for human slaves to be treated like this, Ashton did not like it one bit. They were HIS slaves, not the mistress's for her to do something like this to them.

"Am I supposed to be scared?" Ashton announced and began ripping the chains off, "If that was your plan, then I'm afraid to say you have lost your touch, mistress. I could accept torturing Duncan, but doing the same to a pregnant woman? Have you lost your mind?"

"Looks like you have grown quite a mouth, Ashton. Let me reduce it back to its normal size." Ashton heard the Mistress's voice coming from behind and ducked.

A moment later he heard the whip crack right where his head would have been, had he not ducked.

"My mouth isn't the only thing that's gotten big." Ashton smiled widely as he turned around, "But why don't you check it out yourself?"

"Who gave you the permission to brand them as your slaves?" The mistress roared once again and charged straight into him.

"Why would I need permission to brand my own slaves?" Ashton replied while dodging her attacks, "You yourself told me they were my slaves after all."

Might not be at her level yet, but with all the changes he had gone through after hitting level 15 for all his genes, his stats weren't less than a level 25 being in any way. The mistress was still at least 5 levels above him but since she wasn't going all in, parrying her strikes wasn't difficult at all.

After five or so minutes, the mistress finally managed to momentarily pin him down, But the moment passed as quickly as it came. As Ashton reversed her attempt to get him in a chokehold and locked her in a sleeper hold instead.

"Now if you have calmed down, would you let me explain myself or not?" Ashton asked the mistress while not easing the pressure on her neck.

Ashton might have thought he got her, but he was wrong, as the next moment he ended up with a broken nose along with a fractured arm. A werewolf's skull wasn't something to take lightly.

"Now I am calm.." The mistress spat out a mouthful of blood before pulling Ashton back to his feet, "Talk."

Chapter 160 – They Don't Know That We Know (2)

"The special force... those fckers causing trouble again..." Mera sighed while gulping down some whisky, "But if branding them saved your butt, then I think it's fine. However, next time I'd like to be informed about things like this."

Ashton had just finished narrating a false tale yet again. His improved intelligence definitely seemed to be doing wonders for him. This time it was a tale about how the special force was looking for suspicious people who could have relations with the resistance.

Since Ashton was a mutt, he was their prime suspect. The suspicion on him was also reinforced by the fact that he was present in the same group as Lucas who was killed during the test. Thus he had to shake them off his tail so he branded Duncan and Daniella as his slaves.

Obviously, Mera did not have any reason not to believe him so she let the matter go for now. But she made it clear he knew this was the first and the last time she would let something like that fly.

In the meantime, Ashton was busy healing Duncan and Daniella who were still in a somewhat rough headspace. Thankfully, despite being a bitch, Mera had been careful where her whips landed. Thus, the couple only had a bunch of shallow wounds which would get recovered easily with potions.

"What do you mean again?" Ashton inquired.

"Looks like you weren't informed about it then," Mera put the glass down, "the director has been missing for a couple of weeks now and I suspect this... special force might have a hand in it."

As soon as Mera said that, Ashton's mind began racing. The special force had indeed been on the director's tail, looking for an opportunity to take her down for good. But that wasn't all... if she was missing for two weeks then who the hell issued the dungeon trip he had just been to?

"That can't be possible. I just yesterday I received a request through the guild for me." Ashton pointed out the obvious discrepancy, "If she had been missing for a couple of weeks, then how did she do that?"

"Show me the requested mission details first." Mera almost spat out a mouthful of alcohol as she began reading the details, "You fcking accepted this quest? Are you out of your mind!?"

"It would be surprising if I could think properly after all the 'training' you put me through..." Ashton shrugged his shoulders, "But why did you say so?"

"Because that place is a fcking Killzone! Do you have any idea how many people have died out there? At least a 100!"

"You might wanna add one more there. But that aside, what do you think about it? Could she have possibly made this request?"

The mistress got lost in her thoughts for a moment. Usually, when someone had to make a request for a certain adventurer, the one requesting the services would have to be physically present in the guild to do so. But if it was someone having VIP status, they could make the request remotely.

Thus to answer Ashton's question, yes, she could have done so. But why would she put Ashton in a dangerous situation like that? It didn't make any sense, after all, she had sworn to protect him.

On top of that, Mera couldn't think of a reason why the director would need hysteria flowers all of a sudden. Even if she needed some, she could have simply had it imported like the rest of them and considering she had good relations with the kings of different kingdoms, she would not have had any troubles with it either.

All in all, the request and her disappearance, both reeked of some conspiracy. A plan to either have Ashton eliminated or have something terrible happen to him.

"But who could possibly have a reason to- Donovan... it has to be him." Mera shattered the glass in her hand as she was reminded of Donovan's betrayal, "That bastard has the motive to do something like that, but he doesn't have the authority or the brain to do it all by himself. Someone must be helping him... but who?"

Mera was feeling like she was stuck in a maze. As soon as she solved one problem, another one appeared right in front of her. Usually, she would have guessed it to be Jonathan, but she knew Ashton was just as precious to him as he was to her. Therefore, it couldn't have been him or anyone of his ministers.

"I guess we can find who they are." Ashton mumbled before throwing a bandage towards Mera, "You might not like this plan, but it's the only way to lure them out of their hiding place."

"Go on."

"We can assume they sent me there in hopes of getting rid of me at the hands of the night creatures. But what if they failed? They are no fools. They will have proper contingencies in place to kill me in case the night creatures failed to do so."

Ashton continued, "You see, the reward of completing the request is quite... peculiar. They didn't offer me material things, instead, they opted for information regarding something they knew I wouldn't turn down. I have a feeling that the meeting is their contingency plan."

"There's no way, I'll allow you to do something like that. It's too risky. We should think about-" Mera was in the middle of completing what she was saying but Ashton interrupted her.

"It's risky, that's why it'll work. After all, they don't know that we know about their plans. It's the best possible chance for us to outsmart them and get rid of them simultaneously. Just think about it."

Mera sighed heavily, but she could see what Ashton was trying to do. He wanted to surprise the attacker by reversing their own plan on them. It was a bold and risky manoeuvre, but it was probably the only way to lure those bastards out of their shadows.

"Fine. We'll go with your plan. But I'm coming with you.. No questions asked."